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SUBJECT: IRAQIS IN JORDAN - AUGUST 4 UPDATE

REF: AMMAN 2202

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Post's Refugee Working Group (RWG) met July 29 to discuss developments regarding Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Later in the day, USAID participated in a joint international organization/donor meeting at the Ministry of Planning to discuss the Iraq refugee-related stresses on Jordanian social services, and ways donors and IOs could support GOJ systems which provide services to Iraqis. The GOJ agreed to intensify contacts with donors and international organizations on Iraqi refugee issues. The 2009 UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Iraq kicked off on July 27, with a two day workshop in Amman which brought together UN agencies and NGOs to discuss the development of the CAP and priorities for 2009. For the first time, the CAP will include activities inside and outside Iraq. Next steps take place at the country level with UNHCR playing a leading role in fleshing out the combined humanitarian response in each country. Separately, an Iraqi Embassy contact reports that Iraqi families are approaching their Amman mission in small numbers for assistance in transferring their children from Jordanian to Iraqi schools, and some Iraqis are requesting information on repatriation assistance. The Iraqi Embassy is considering ways to assist. End Summary.

State of Play -----

¶2. (SBU) Access to education and health care remain two key concerns for Iraqis. According to Post contacts and as noted by Prime Minister Nader Al-Dahabi to Charge earlier this month, all indications are that Iraqi children will be able to access Jordanian public schools under the same conditions as the 2007-08 school year with free tuition and free textbooks provided (Ref A). Iraqis continue to access the Jordanian public health system at the rate of uninsured Jordanians. Iraqis pay a fee to register at a public health care facility and then pay a fee for each health service. Care for chronic diseases as well as secondary and tertiary care is expensive for many vulnerable Iraqis. There are some programs, operating with the support of UNHCR's health committee, that pay for specialized care or surgeries for a small number of Iraqi beneficiaries. The scope of such programs is likely constrained by funding limitations, not need. In July, WHO contributed \$200,000 to the King Hussein Cancer Center's Iraqi Goodwill Fund which covers the cancer treatments of poor Iraqis. The Johns Hopkins-UNICEF survey of the health-seeking behavior of Iraqis in Jordan continues to collect data. Results are anticipated in September and are expected to provide substantial new information about Iraqi health needs in Jordan.

Joint IO and Donor Meeting with GOJ -----

¶3. (C) USAID joined a combined meeting on July 29 of international organizations (IOs), donors and the GOJ coordination committee addressing Iraqi refugee issues in

Jordan. Nasser Shreideh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) chairs this committee, which includes participation of the SecGens of the ministries of Education and Health, the Coordinator for Iraqi issues at the Ministry of Interior, as well as the Foreign Ministry's Director of the Negotiations Coordination Bureau. Donors and IOs sought a frank discussion on the needs, gaps, and challenges facing the GOJ in providing Iraqis access to public schools and health care facilities. UNHCR Jordan Representative Imran Riza (who separately briefed Charge on August 3) led the IO delegation which included participation from UNICEF, WHO, and the EU Charge d'Affaires. The GOJ's chief concern voiced at the meeting was ensuring that the donor community and international organizations did not engage in activities that put undue spotlight on Iraqis' access to public health and education services. The GOJ wanted to mitigate the potential for a negative popular reaction among Jordanians to perceived special treatment for Iraqis, especially as the living conditions of many middle class and poor Jordanians deteriorate because of significant inflation in the price of food and fuel currently cascading throughout the economy and pinching Jordanian families.

¶4. (C) Donors and IOs have asked the GOJ for additional and/or updated information about Iraqi enrollment in public schools and usage of public health care services in order to better target assistance to support Jordan's social services systems. IOs have also asked for access to conduct monitoring of their funded health and education programs in order to ensure assistance goals are met. MOPIC SecGen Shreideh made it clear that the GOJ will not permit outside monitoring in schools and healthcare establishments, noting

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that the GOJ itself would perform this function. Note: To date, MOPIC has provided information about Iraqi children in schools at the directorate level, not by individual school as requested by the IOs and donors. Separately, the GOJ does not collect nationality information at the public health centers, and cannot provide statistics on the number of Iraqis accessing public health services, although UNHCR is collecting such data in several hospitals on a pilot basis with the cooperation of Jordanian authorities. End Note.

¶5. (C) SecGen Shreideh told the group that the cabinet was meeting at that moment to make the formal decision on allowing Iraqi children into Jordanian schools for the coming school year. Shreideh expected that the cabinet would formally approve the entry of Iraqi children for the 2008-09 school year. Citing concerns about popular negative reactions, the GOJ expressed a strong inclination to approve targeted information campaigns that reach Iraqis rather than the general public. Shreideh noted that the Jordanian schools are even more crowded this year than last as rising prices have forced large numbers of Jordanian families to move their children from private schools into public schools. To date, over 27,000 children have moved into the public school system, with about two weeks remaining before the school year begins.

¶6. (C) Shreideh suggested that the committee meet jointly with donors and IOs every six weeks to discuss education and health issues related to Iraqis in Jordan. UNHCR and UNICEF considered MOPIC's suggestion a positive sign and saw MOPIC's initiative to schedule recurring meetings as a key step forward in better coordination between the GOJ, the donor and IO community. Additionally, the group agreed to two additional meetings at the working level, one on health issues and the other on education issues. The education meeting is expected to take place next week and the health meeting will follow the second week of August.

UN BEGINS WORK ON 2009 IRAQ CAP

¶7. (SBU) UN agencies and NGOs working in Iraq and refugee

hosting countries in the region met in Amman on July 27 and 28 to begin developing the UN's 2009 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Iraq. The 2009 CAP will consist of two pillars, combining for the first time activities inside and outside Iraq. Note: Pillar I is for activities inside Iraq and Pillar II is for outside Iraq. RefCoord attended sessions on Pillar II activities. End Note. There was considerable debate on the issue of refugee numbers in the CAP. IOs generally believe that estimates of refugee population size provided by regional governments are inflated, however UNHCR made it clear that it did not see the value in provoking a confrontation with host governments over numbers. While there were differences of opinion among IO and NGO participants, at the end of the workshop the agreed way forward was to briefly cite the host governments' estimates in the CAP but focus on the number of beneficiaries the UN and NGOs believe they can assist in each country. This debate may well flare up again as the CAP process moves forward.

18. (SBU) CAP Secretariats will be established in Jordan and Syria, jointly run by UNHCR and OCHA. CAP development now moves to the country level with wide participation from UN agencies, NGOs, ICRC offices, donors, and host governments. Sector strategy groups will develop sectoral plans and propose projects for review at the country level by mid-September before being passed on for additional review at the regional level. The final draft from each country is due mid-October and the CAP launch is anticipated on December 3.

IRAQ EMBASSY READY TO ASSIST RETURNS, NO PLAN IN PLACE YET

19. (C) ECON's Iraq watcher met July 22 with an Iraqi embassy counterpart who relayed his embassy still held informally to the estimate of 300,000 to 400,000 Iraqis in Jordan. He reported that recently his embassy has processed between 400-500 sets of paperwork for children transferring from Jordanian schools back to Iraqi schools. Note: The Iraqi embassy estimate was that this meant 100-150 families were preparing to return. Separately, UNHCR ResRep Riza told Charge that the Iraqi embassy was able to document about 100 persons seeking return, lower than what the Iraqi Embassy has claimed in conversations with us and UNHCR. End Note. In addition, some 200 families have approached the Iraqi embassy to express interest in assistance for returning to Iraq. The Embassy is considering options for expediting their return which reportedly may include providing bus transport and cash assistance, among other unspecified things. Comment: It is clear that while the Iraqi Embassy does not necessarily have a "plan on the books" for returns, they are ready to start

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things up when the GOI issues a directive. End Comment.

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